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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6050
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIIU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
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DEPT FOR SCA/FO, S/CT, SCA/A, NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76
TREASURY FOR APARAMESWARAN, ABAUKOL
STATE PLEASE PASS USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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SUBJECT: KUNAR TRIP HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR MORE AFGHAN INPUT
INTO ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

¶1. SUMMARY: Increasing Afghans, involvement in development projects was one of the main themes of the Ambassador's June 4 trip to the PRT in Asadabad, Kunar province. The Ambassador met with Governor Wafa, members of the local shura, and students from a nearby school who were an enthusiastic audience for his remarks. He also visited the site of a tragic rocket attack on an open air school. There are significant needs in this province, as is true throughout Afghanistan, but there is a clear USG plan to start to meet them. END SUMMARY.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

¶2. The ambassador repeatedly asked local leaders how more local participation in development projects could be encouraged. Most responded initially with uncertainty, but when pressed usually agreed that they could find laborers to assist in projects. Constructing stretches of stone road was repeatedly suggested as a potential pilot project, especially as a means to connect small valleys to the roads that run through major valleys and to district centers. Similar roads have been constructed elsewhere in Afghanistan and the prevalence of requisite stones and skilled locals makes it an appealing project. The PRT Commander and USAID representatives agreed to explore the feasibility of such construction. Aside from roads and protective walls, aquaculture and apiculture were also suggested by the Afghans.

TAX COLLECTION

¶3. Tax collection appears to be a confusing topic, as elsewhere in Afghanistan. Governor Wafa said that while most of the revenue had to be sent back to Kabul, municipal tax revenue can be kept within the province. Wafa pointed out that the lack of shops and markets results in very little revenue. He is hopeful that, with greater development, this may improve.

ILLEGAL LOGGING

¶4. Illegal logging continues to be a problem in Nuristan and Kunar provinces. The Governor mentioned a plan by the central government to auction off seized timber. The visibility of the timber, to would-be poachers, presently serves as a reminder of the ban. Without this reminder and with the government able to raise revenue from the seizure of illegal timber there are concerns that the logging may continue.

Q & A WITH STUDENTS

¶5. Visits to two schools made it clear that education is a priority for this region, although there is still a clear need for teachers and facilities. The Ambassador stressed that these requests are not unique to Kunar and that Afghans need to start to move away from compiling & laundry lists⁸ and towards identifying priorities and areas for collaboration. (Note: Unfortunately, his words appeared to fall on deaf ears, as the locals continued to present the Ambassador with lists of projects throughout the day. End Note.) One interesting outcome of a discussion with school-aged boys was that most are considering jobs in the ANA or ANP.

¶6. In his remarks to the group, the Ambassador compared today's Afghanistan to the country he visited extensively in the 1960's. Most of what existed had been broken but there was little infrastructure then. Afghans now are more aware of what they do not have and it will take a long time to meet their new needs

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and expectations. The US has built 400 schools, including ten in Kunar, and has trained 60,000 teachers, but we recognize that more are needed. In closing the Ambassador stressed that the US was not here to rule Afghanistan but truly wants the Afghan people to take the lead in managing their country. The US will ask Pakistan to do more to fight the Taliban and terrorism, a comment that was received enthusiastically. He stressed that both states should have a common interest in fighting extremism.

NEUMANN